Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Reliability and Continuity of Communications Networks, Including Broadband Technologies	)	PS Docket No. 11-60

COMMENTS OF VERIZON

The nation's five largest wireless carriers entered into the Wireless Network Resiliency Cooperative Framework[1] in recognition of the importance of reliable wireless services to consumers and Federal, state, and local governments during and after major disasters. The wireless industry adopted the framework to memorialize commitments to improve network resiliency in the face of natural disasters. The framework recognizes that a prescriptive one size-fits-all approach would not provide the best way for wireless providers to improve the reliability of their networks. The Commission agreed, and the result has been improved industry performance during disasters. The Commission should not now second-guess that judgment just a couple years on by imposing numerical metrics that would draw apples-to-oranges comparisons between service providers' performance. The Commission and other stakeholders, however, understandably want to ensure that service providers meet the framework's commitments. So does Verizon. The Commission can achieve this goal through an annual confidential information-gathering questionnaire, without also expanding the framework beyond wireless service providers.

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[1] *See* Letter to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, from CTIA, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon, PS Docket Nos. 11-60 and 13-239 (Apr. 27, 2016).

I. TARGETED, RECURRING INPUT ON PROVIDERS' RELIABILITY EFFORTS WILL ENABLE THE COMMISSION TO MEANINGFULLY MONITOR THE FRAMEWORK'S EFFECTIVENESS.

The Commission supported the framework's flexible, results-based approach in large part because of the challenges of establishing straightforward and objective numerical metrics to measure wireless network reliability.[2] Those challenges remain true today, as the framework's effectiveness cannot be reduced to a simple numerical formula. The Commission should instead monitor participating providers' adherence to the framework through a confidential annual filing in which service providers provide a narrative response to a standardized set of questions.

Those questions would elicit relevant information for each of the framework's commitments. For example, the Commission could obtain relevant information for the "roaming under disasters" commitment simply by asking if, during a prior year's ESF-2 level disaster event(s), a company: (i) enabled in-bound roaming for another carrier during a disaster, either as part of a commercial roaming agreement or an ad hoc arrangement or (ii) required roaming access to another provider's network for its own customers in the affected area. These responses would address the commitment's basic goal of ensuring that carriers can avail themselves of disaster-related roaming when needed. In contrast, trying to quantify this commitment through an alternative numerical metric quickly becomes fraught with caveats. For example, roaming would have been unnecessary if all providers in the affected area were able to maintain coverage, or a provider might have affirmatively decided to *not* activate roaming on another provider's network during a particular event. But answering "zero" to the numerical metrics suggested in

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[2] *See Improving the Resiliency of Mobile Wireless Communications Networks; Reliability and Continuity of Communications Networks, Including Broadband Outages*, Order, 31 FCC Rcd 13745, ¶¶ 8-10 (2016).

the *Public Notice* (the percentage of customers covered by roaming agreements or calls completed due to roaming agreements)[3] could erroneously suggest that a provider failed to meet that commitment.

The Commission could easily apply a similar approach for the other framework components. For example, providers could describe the mutual aid they requested from and provided to other service providers, and the status of their efforts to implement the remaining commitments. The Commission could solicit this information in the wake of an ESF-2 event, but an annual submission may be preferable as it would enable signatories to focus on disaster recovery when ESF-2 events occur in close sequence (as often happens during hurricane season). It also would ensure that signatories focus on and promote the framework throughout the year, regardless of whether they are affected by an ESF-2 event during a given period. And any submission should be deemed confidential, to encourage participation in the framework and in the Commission's monitoring efforts, and because the information would be competitively sensitive and sensitive for national security purposes.

Finally, this approach would help the Commission meet its Paperwork Reduction Act responsibilities by ensuring that it uses the least burdensome method of gathering relevant information.[4] Service providers should compile much of this information throughout the course of a year, both for internal after-event assessments of a company's disaster performance, and in

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[3] *See Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Seeks Comment on the Effectiveness of the Wireless Network Resiliency Cooperative Framework and for the Study on Public Access to 911 Services During Emergencies*, Public Notice, PS Docket No. 11-60, DA 18-614, at 2 (PSHSB 2018).

[4] *See* 5 C.F.R. § 1320.5(d)(1)(i) (information collection must be "the least burdensome necessary for the proper performance of the agency's functions to comply with legal requirements and achieve program objectives").

their efforts to be responsive to external government and industry stakeholders during and after disaster events. And this light-touch solution would respect the Commission's decision to terminate the underlying rulemaking proceeding and rely on the framework's voluntary, non-regulatory approach to network reliability.

II. THE FRAMEWORK SHOULD REMAIN FOCUSED ON WIRELESS SERVICE PROVIDER SIGNATORIES.

The framework should remain focused on parties to the framework that are wireless providers, and on their relationships with one another and with state and local government stakeholders. The circumstances that adversely affect communications networks during disasters, such as loss of commercial power, flooding and downed trees, affect wireless networks and wireline backhaul networks differently. The impact on wireline networks thus may require different relationships and methods of communicating with other stakeholders, such as the electric utilities with whom they may share pole and conduit space, and with local governments that provide access to rights of way. In addition, contractual arrangements extensively govern the relationships and responsibilities between wireless and backhaul providers, after lengthy negotiations in many cases. The framework is thus not amenable to incorporating backhaul providers directly, or to backhaul-specific commitments from wireless signatories. In the near term, it is more important that providers of wireline backhaul services and facilities continue to participate in DHS/NCC coordination efforts during and after disasters, and to embrace NIST's efforts to establish cross-sector community resilience practices.

Incorporating backhaul providers into the framework also would not meaningfully improve the already extensive network reliability arrangements they have with wireless providers. Wireless providers' relationships with backhaul providers are fundamentally different than those with other wireless providers and local governments. Because backhaul facilities are

an integral component of the services a wireless provider offers to its own customers, wireless providers have significant incentive to obtain—and do obtain—contractual arrangements that address network reliability issues. The typical service level and other agreements between wireless and backhaul providers extensively address network reliability responsibilities, and include processes for establishing trouble tickets and lines of communications during service outages. While the wireless industry's challenges working with backhaul providers after Hurricane Maria were formidable, those challenges were the result of the devastating impact of that disaster on the islands' infrastructure more broadly.

Respectfully submitted,

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